

Contributions

NEW YORK NOTES

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Some General Features

In these notes I have an eye to those who are not acquainted with the city and who furthermore have not seen conditions as they are in most of our large cities. It is my belief that the most of our readers are people who have not observed these conditions. Of course, if any of you are interested especially in the problems of the great cities, especially of New York, get "How the Other Half Lives" by Jacob A. Riis or his, "A Ten Year's War." Every week I am seeing things almost exactly similar to many of the things he describes.

New York is a very compact city built on an island, Manhattan by name, which lies in the mouth of the Hudson river. It is about sixteen miles long and two miles wide at the widest part. Socially it is divided into the East Side where the poor live and the West Side, where the rich and fashionable—the nabobs—reside. It is one of the easiest cities to find one's way about in, in which I have ever been. Fourth Ave., or Park Ave. as it is called, above forty second street is the dividing line. West of that is aristocratic New York. East of that plebian New York. That is a broad generalization to which there are some exceptions.

On Fifth Ave., Madison Ave. and Fourth Ave. are the palatial residences of the rich.

On Third, Second, First Ave. and Ave. A are the tenements teeming with the common poor people, the foreigners, "the scum of the earth" as one man expressed it to me. On Fifth Ave. you see the fancy turn-outs of the rich, with horses having their tails docked in true English style, and coachmen in English livery. Here are the automobiles. Three or four blocks east on Lexington, Third and Second Aves. you see instead the "cracky wagon" of the fruit and vegetable vender, and all manner of vehicles of the poor and the foreigner. Here the shrill cries of all kinds of tradesmen sound like a demon pit let loose. No rubber-tired vehicles here. No asphalt pavement. But steel tires which rattle terribly over the Belgian blocks with which the streets are paved. On Fifth Ave. you see in the carriages with fashionably dressed ladies more dogs than children. On Second Ave. it is children versus dogs. The streets fairly swarm with children in this East Side. The streets are their only playgrounds. There they are from the toddling baby to the grown young man and woman.

Sure, Central Park is only five blocks from Second Ave. but it seems that very few children go from that district over to Central Park. And by the way, New York has done a noble thing in reserving for park purposes such an immense amount of valuable land right in the midst of the city. It is fine for those who live close enough to take their children there, but my observations there

lead me to believe that it is generally the better classes of people to take advantage of the opportunities of Central Park.

The Buildings

I shall defer to a future time, after I shall have had more time to study them, some description of the tenements. But, in general it may be said that New York is a city of high buildings. Not only that it has the highest buildings in the world, but its buildings in general will range on an average twice as high as those of Chicago. It must be from the very nature of the case. New York has only a limited amount of ground on which to build. Chicago has Illinois. New York of necessity is compact together. No waste land is to be found here. You see very few vacant lots advertized for sale here. It is nearly all occupied. And these tall buildings are the homes of people, not business offices only but even the homes of the rich on Fifth Ave. are great in perpendicular rather than in the horizontal. And it is especially true of the tenements, which serve as the homes for most of the people of New York.

One just back of our room has seven stories and a basement. Every floor is occupied and basement, by families. For them it is a home. And it seems that the higher the buildings get towards heaven the lower the inhabitants gravitate towards hell. There are some things here in the conditions of life in these tenements which I have seen already which give a man heart ache. And I'm told that I have seen only the fringe of the garment.

General Impressions of the Population

New York ought to be an ideal place for a second Pentecost. For here you have one element of the Pentecost of Apostolic days—the variety of races of people. I presume that the Scriptural enumeration of those present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost of that day could be literally duplicated in this city to-day. "Parthians and Medes, and Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Lydia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. In New York there is, besides the unnumbered thousands of foreigners who are scattered promiscuously all over the city, a Syrian, a Chinese, a Negro, a Jewish, and an Italian Quarter. New York is a foreign city. She has more Syrians than Damascus, more Jews than Jerusalem, more Irish than Dublin, more Germans than Hamburg, more Italians than Rome. And if you live on the East side you come to feel that they are nearly all foreigners. Of course down town and on the street cars you meet many whom you at once label as Americans. Cripples and rickety children are to be seen often. It is no wonder when you look at the way children dodge around among the teams and street cars and when you consider that the street is their only playground. The carelessness of the teamsters

and motormen and of the people themselves contributes to the frequency of accidents. Human life is cheap here in spite of the fact that hospitals abound and of a grade which is very high. Last Sunday night I heard Dr. McArthur say he would rather raise a family of boys in New York than in any country village. I thought, "Yes in a fine house on the West side but how about if you had to raise them in two or three small rooms on Second or Third Ave.?"

Some Personal Notes

The Wesley Evangelists held meetings last week in this church where we live. They are a band of business men, who for the last twenty odd years have given their evenings to the holding of evangelistic services in churches and chapels too poor to pay for such services. They charge nothing and are wise and efficient workers. They exemplify the power of consecrated effort on the part of laymen.

At Union Seminary every week on Thursday there is a conference of students and professors. At the one last week, Dr. Newton, a medical missionary from India, gave a splendid talk. As I said last week Union has always been noted for its missionary spirit and there is a volunteer band among the young men. Dr. Newton advised those who proposed to become foreign missionaries to not be in a hurry to get to their fields before they had got the best schooling this country could give.

On Friday it was our privilege to listen to Dr. Casper Rene Gregory from Leipsic, Germany. He is professor in one of the German Universities.

On Saturday wife and I attended services in Beth-El., a Jewish synagog on Fifth Avenue. It is the finest church building I was ever in. It is composed of what are known as reformed Jews. That is those who have given up the ancient hope of a coming Messiah. The Rabbi preached a short sermon from the first few verses of Genesis. It was a sermon which might have been preached in a Christian church, only it lacked any reference to Christ.

I had never realized before as I did then how much our thought, our ideas and our hope would lack, did we not believe in Christ; and how much Christ brought and gave to us. It was to me a worn out religion, dead and lacking the mighty pulse-beats of the Christian church.

I saw a sign a few days ago on a saloon, and since have seen it often. It was this: "Ehret's Best Lager, Hell Gate Brewery." What an appropriate name for a brewery. It reminds one of the candid, damnableness of that old saloon keeper in Ottumwa, Iowa, who had this sign over his door, "The way to Hell." It is also said of this same saloon keeper that a man once came into his saloon and said, "Give me the best you've got." The old fellow coolly handed him a glass of water. The fellow tasted and looked at him in blank astonishment. The saloon keeper said, "you fool, if you only knew it